

The dipterous larvae were up to 10 mm. in length, and devoured the developing embryos. They bored through the albumen leaving a meshwork of tunnels which frequently caused the spawn clump to disintegrate, confirming that each larva was responsible for the destruction of several ova. Pupation was not observed, and attempts to collect adult flies were unsuccessful.

Bokermann (1958) recorded a very similar infestation of the spawn of *Physalacmus cuvieri* Fitzinger found in the vicinity of Sao Paulo, Brazil. The clumps of spawn of this species are also laid at the waterline. The parasite in this case was identified as *Gastrops niger* Williston of the family Ephydriidae, the larvae of some of whose members are known to breed in pools of crude petroleum.

Parasitism of frogs' eggs has not been previously recorded from the New Guinea region.

REFERENCE

BOOKERMANN, W. C. 1958. Frogs' eggs parasitized by Dipterous larvae. *Herpetologica*, 13 (3): 231-232.

—MICHAEL J. TYLER, Department of Human Physiology and Pharmacology, The University of Adelaide.

Increase in Abundance of the Pink-eared Duck in Western Australia.—Although the Pink-eared Duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*) is likely to be found anywhere in the State, it was until fairly recently considered to be rare (D. L. Serventy and H. M. Whittell, *Birds of Western Australia*, 1951: 192) since only a few specimens had been collected (H. M. Whittell, *The Emu*, 41, 1941: 164; D. L. Serventy, *The Emu*, 47, 1948: 270). A slight increase in numbers was reported during 1952 (D. L. Serventy, *W.A. Nat.*, 3, 1953: 187) and subsequently it was recorded in relatively large numbers at various localities in the South-West (J. R. Ford, *The Emu*, 57, 1957: 354; 58, 1958: 35; V. Serventy, *The Emu*, 58, 1958: 11) indicating that the species had undergone a remarkable increase in abundance.

Additional observations on the Pink-eared Duck demonstrate that the phase of relative abundance shows no indication of changing. Localities where I have recorded the species are listed hereunder from south to north.

Jandakot Lake: ea. 50 on May 23 and 24, 1959; ea. 12 on June 21, 1959; ea. 30 on December 19, 1959.

Yangebup Lake: 10 on February 23, 1958; 20 on May 11, 1958; 136 on April 5, 1959.

Coolbellup Lake: 51 on February 9, 1958; 38 on February 23, 1958; ea. 20 on March 16, 1958; ea. 7 on March 26, 1959; 6 on April 11, 1959.

Marrida Swamp, Moora: ea. 50 on December 13 and 14, 1958. John Warham carried out observations on the nesting of the species at this locality (*The Wildfowl Trust Ninth Annual Report*, 1958, 118-127).

Naraling, fresh water swamps about 6 miles south-east: 4 on February 3, 1959; ea. 150 including a pair with ducklings on January 9, 1961.

Harding River, near Roebourne: 2 on pool along river on November 1, 1959.

In the South-West, the species is known to breed on the fresh water swamps and lakes at Gundaring, Moora, Dowerin, Carnamah and Naraling, and only visits the coastal plain near Perth during the summer and autumn months when many of the inland expanses of water have evaporated.

—JULIAN FORD, Attadale.

Feeding of Young Passerine Birds by Nest-mate.—Owing to an accident on September 30, 1961, in which the nest of a Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*) fell from beneath a Swan River jetty, I became foster parent to three recently-hatched swallow chicks. These were reared successfully on a diet of houseflies, mincemeat and meat meal.

The three chicks fledged on October 21, 1961, at 25-26 days of age, but continued to beg for food. On several such occasions, subsequent to the immediate food requirements being fulfilled, I observed one chick—never a particular individual—feed one or other of its nest-mates. It would beg for and receive a fly from me in the usual manner, but instead of swallowing the food, simply close its bill over it, all the while emitting a peculiar whining throaty chirp and looking abstractedly about as though searching for something. After a few seconds of so doing it would then proceed to thrust the fly against the body of the nearest begging nest-mate, which, on feeling the movement, would increase its activity. All begging was orientated toward me. However, the vigorous calling of the unfed birds seemed to stimulate activity on the part of the one still holding the fly, and after a few further thrusts the gaping bill would be located and the fly transferred in typical parent-chick feeding attitude. The two birds would then settle quietly.

I have sometimes observed this same behaviour in several of my hand-reared nestling and recently-fledged Zebra Finches (*Taeniopygia castanotis*). In this case the first-satisfied bird would cease to beg, but respond to the continued begging of its nest-mates by actually going through the process of regurgitating seed, producing a number which were held at the tip of the bill.

Inexperienced downward thrusts would then be made at the forward parts of the begging chicks. In almost all cases a gape would eventually be found, in this instance usually helped by the calling chick turning toward the bird with the seed, and an attitude fully suggestive of parent-chick feeding relation adopted.

I could not ascertain how much of one bird's feed was so shared, but certainly a few seeds were transferred.

If this behaviour is truly representative of what happens in the wild, it could have a marked effect on the survival rate in a brood of young birds, should one in particular receive an over-abundance of food from its parents compared with other nest-mates. It may be considered as biologically advantageous behaviour, a kind of built-in compensatory mechanism to equalise food distribution.

—C. A. NICHOLLS, Nedlands.